

DAMIAN





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HORIA DAMIAN

THE HILL

THE SOLOMON R. GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, NEW YORK

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The Artist

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	<i>by Thomas M. Messer</i>	9
Damian and the Actual Infinite	<i>by Radu Varia</i>	11
<i>The Hill</i>		21
Genesis of <i>The Hill</i>		30
Works in the Exhibition		31
Chronology	<i>by Radu Varia</i>	55

FOREWORD

Horia Damian's relatively unknown work is rooted in a European tradition of monument builders most admirably exemplified by his famous fellow Rumanian, Constantin Brancusi, in such structures as *The Gate of the Kiss* at Tirgu Jiu. Through the deliberateness of the choices of his subjects, and the analysis in depth of a very few themes, Damian may be likened to Christo who also reveals the infinite variety of object-ideas through work cycles like *The Valley Curtain* or *The Running Fence*. But unlike Christo and rather like Yves Klein, Damian's friend and contemporary, this Paris-based Rumanian is ultimately concerned with the intuition of an extra-terrestrial spatial order.

Horia Damian's *Hill*, installed together with related studies, in the Guggenheim's main rotunda, is large and commanding, superbly shaped, textured with glistening beads and colored in bright, light absorbing yellow. Through such means, the sculpture conveys underlying attributes not of any one particular hill, but of the hill idea in general. Acutely observed from its limitless aspects, studiously researched and rendered through appropriate plastic analogies, Damian's *Hill* becomes an unsurpassed perception of that particular reality fragment.

The Hill sculpture is the result of extensive preparation. In his black and white drawings Damian tunes tonal relationships toward a maximal evocation of three-dimensionality. Through the use of color in his pastels and mixed media, he opens up, in his own terms, the perennial dialogue between surface and depth, figure and ground. Through persistence of the pictorial elements, the sculptural realization, though three-dimensional in fact, becomes in his final version insubstantial and dematerialized as if it were the outgrowth of a non-gravitational system.

The Hill then is the final result of formal investigations carried out through the media of drawing, painting

and sculpture. Such exhaustive analysis is lavished only upon a few themes that, over the years, engaged the artist's creativity. *The Hill* as seen here, is part of a progression that goes back to the early 1950s. It was preceded by sequential studies of Galaxies, Cosmic Landscapes, and Flying Saucers, which, apart from the architecturally predicated Pools and Fountains, are the only themes developed by the artist.

In all of these, Damian aims for essentially the same results, and all his concepts therefore have parallel meaning within his total œuvre. Damian's art, based upon impeccable craftsmanship and an obsessive preoccupation with materials, cannot be faulted for lacking concreteness. But despite the sparseness and reductiveness of Damian's structures, minimal and formalistic interpretations do not in his case suffice. For his explicit references are to a celestial rather than a terrestrial space, to an ideal, rather than a palpable world order, and to sacral rather than temporal realities.

Thomas M. Messer, Director
The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

Radu Varia

On The Hill

Strangely enough, the idea of the hill came to Damian at a time when his work was involved in geometric investigations. He had discovered neoplasticism around 1950-51 and had been particularly impressed by Mondrian's *Place de la Concorde* and, albeit to a lesser degree, by the experiments of Auguste Herbin. Yet it was at this very moment that his work suddenly showed evidence of what one might call lyrical aspirations, tied by deep roots to a non-geometric tendency (or, if you wish, non-implicit geometry). It is in this context that in 1951 and 1952, he paints the two pictures that will become the cornerstones of his future development *The Starry Sky*, 1951 (page 44), fully displays the method of serialization of a single basic unit which Damian will constantly employ in his mature work. The gouache known as *Structure with Red Ovals*, 1952 (page 36), currently shown at the Guggenheim Museum sets the stage for Damian's unique use of geometry – a geometry on the poetic mode which accounts for the originality of his forms. In *Structure with Red Ovals* is the first astonishing instance of the tumular shape which, twenty-five years later, will become *The Hill*, just as the ovals in that picture are an intimation of the small spheres to be used later.

On the formal level *The Hill* presents in exemplary fashion the essential elements of Damian's language. The shape starts out as a rapidly rising plane, culminates with a surface slightly smaller than the initial plane, and falls off rapidly into a figure that implies the closing off of the entire process. The fairly flat lateral areas may be considered as accompanying forms or as buttresses of the axial incline.

The form as a whole – and this is a permanent trait of Damian's work – is inflected by a kind of "rift" which creates a slightly convex and a somewhat concave surface on the side walls. The 380,000 spheres, each 14 millimeters in diameter, covering the surface create a vibrant pellicular fabric. They are set in parallel rows which occasionally blur, as if under tension, thereby warding off the danger of mechanical monotony. The entire surface fabric, a nearly 80-square-meter expanse, first moves off slightly toward the right, against the grain of the form (which, when seen from the front, tumbles straight down toward the viewer), it culminates parallel to the form at the top, and then veers abruptly toward the left before plummeting to the ground. This, too, is a constant of Damian's practice, for invariably his shapes follows the same subtle movement : a slow start toward the right, orthogonal rearing, rapid decline in the opposite direction.

The way in which the fabric of spheres is disposed on the convex lateral wall (the right-hand wall when one faces the work) produces an effect of rows almost parallel to the ground. On the other hand, the rows of spheres set on the concave wall follow a curvilinear course which, toward its close, swerves abruptly toward the ground.

Yet beyond this formal aspect *The Hill* displays a mysterious presence and an exemplary meaning. By simplifying his syntax and vocabulary

to the extreme, Damian goes beyond the borders of physical geometry into what we might call a geometry of the invisible predicated on an ideal order of gravity. Color is reduced to a single hue : yellow – the mystical symbol of revelation. The entire process is based on only one basic element : the sphere, the symbol of perfection as well as the form that provides maximum reflection of light. The fabric covering *The Hill* may be regarded as infinite, although, to be sure, its infinity is finite : theoretically one perceives every point (every sphere) in it; actually, however, one only perceives the whole. This whole thus calls to mind the notion of the *transfinite* : all the points are grasped as a single reality.

A work of obvious spiritual elevation, *The Hill* embodies the attitude recently formulated by the artist : “In my art, I express the relationship between reality as I see it and something behind this reality which enables me to perceive. I realize that while remaining only on the perceptive level one is inevitably brought to the object and the manipulation that surrounds it. My feeling is that approaching the invisible is the only way that I can express beauty.” ¹

What Damian insists upon here is the necessary relationship between cognition and experience : the artist must experience and express the reality that lies beyond the senses. The similarities between the convictions of Damian and Constantin Brancusi are evident : “I do not feel attached to my own person, I stride amidst essential realities. Art is not an evasion of reality, but a flight into a new reality, the only valid reality.”

Giulio Carlo Argan points out that “in our scientific and technological world, Damian has revived

¹ Horia Damian : *Forward* to the catalogue of his exhibition at Galerie Denise René, New York, 1976.

the ancient view of art as an instrument of knowledge.”² Knowledge, according to this view, insists upon the concurrent development of subject (the student, the creator) and object (the thing studied or created).

Today's art tends to concentrate upon the object at the expense of the subject. Artists as well as scientists have repeatedly drawn attention to this reduction, which is one of the major symptoms of the crisis which our civilization is currently undergoing. Nevertheless, the artist – that is to say : any human being when functioning both on the level of experience and knowledge – continues, were it unconsciously, to aspire toward that reality or, at least, toward the invisible horizon on which it may manifest itself. When Damian or Brancusi talk about the absolute, about the reality beyond appearances, they have in mind this pre-modern relationship between subject and object.

While this is a spiritual experience, it is the very opposite of a religious one. It is generated by the relationship between self and reality, between the reality beyond appearances and a self that is separate from it only, so to say, for purposes of discussion. Damian thus seems to be heir to a timeless and, more than ever, valuable tradition.

Beyond *The Hill*

The limited object known as *The Hill* thus leads us inevitably towards an abstract horizon which we shall understand better if we consider for a moment the idea of infinity.

While the shapes used by Damian in his sculpture are almost always simple geometric forms (octagon,

² G.C. Argan, in the catalogue of Damian, *Galaxy*, Stadt Aachen Neue Galerie – Sammlung Ludwig, 1974.

parallelepiped, etc.), their surface gives an impression of multiplicity, unlimitedness, infinity.

I propose to call the notion suggested by this impression the *actual infinite*. The ambiguity of these terms serves precisely as a reminder of the dual level on which we must consider the attitude which they seek to describe : the mathematical and the mystical planes. History itself bears witness to the validity of this link-up : the two mathematicians to whom we owe the notion of *actual infinite*, Bolzano and Cantor, were both possessed by a deep mystical feeling.

As everyone knows, Georg Cantor, a German Catholic of Russian Jewish origin, founded the theory of sets about a century ago. Infinity did not really exist in pre Cantorian mathematics but was merely as Gauss puts it, "a manner of speaking." Before Cantor, the infinite exists only as a virtual excess of any finite established quantity. Therefore, in pre Cantorian mathematics an infinite value is never reached for the simple reason that infinity does not exist as a value. It was the Austrian priest and mathematician, Bolzano who had begun to develop the notion that theological infinity is *actual infinity*. In this new sense, infinity is a simultaneous coexistence of all its elements, whereas in the older sense of infinity, these elements were given successively without ever attaining a point of completion.

It is Cantor, however, who must be credited for having fully developed this paradoxical concept in mathematics. He, too, insists upon the theological origin of this "infinite". It may be objected that a notion which so belatedly made its entrance on the scientific scene, and which gave rise to such controversy, has no place in the realm of the arts, all the more since the artist obviously did not come by it through scientific study. But this is to forget that poetic intuition may precede, or run parallel to, scientific discovery. We thus

find the notion of *actual infinity*, also called *transfinity*, referred to by Stéphane Mallarmé in his metaphysical poem, "Igitur". (In fact, Mallarmé deplores, rightly, that the science of his time does not make use of it).

The Hill as "Axis of the World"

In his studies on shamanism, which he says probably existed at least 20,000 - 30,000 years ago (the earliest form of religious experience, therefore), Mircea Eliade speaks of the key role played by what he calls the "axis of the world". This axis traverses the various layers of heavens and hells – and along the way, earth itself – thereby maintaining the harmony of the cosmos. We are thus confronted here with a veritable archetype which, to this day continuously recurs in the dreams and fantasies of men. The number of these layers, although variable, is most frequently equal to 9 or, even more so, to 7.¹

¹ It seems that there is a possibility for giving every number inferior to 10 what one might call a "natural" geometrical representation : a square for 4, a square plus its center for 5, etc. In most cases, this representation is based on a distribution into one or more geometrical figures standing for numbers. But 9 is seen, so to speak, as 3+3+3 and 7 as 3+1+3 (as instanced by the 7-branched chandelier), that is to say as a division into 3 ciphers. The case of 7 is even more complex than that of 9, since 1 became a cipher only at a late stage in history (in ancient Greece, enumeration still began with 2). Hence if we consider these numbers not quantitatively but from the point of view of their intuitive complexity, the most important is 7. Through its simplicity, 7 lends itself to the visualisation required by intuition. Through its complexity it lends itself to the conveyance of the notion of an infinity. Thus the number 7 appears to be particularly apt to express, in tangible constructions, the notion of *actual infinite*, as opposed to *virtual infinite* with which we have been dealing.

The act of creation thus becomes possible at the precise point where the vertical axis (the *axis of the world*) traverses the horizontal plane, the level of contingency. This *point* corresponds to the decisive *moment* of creation. In this context the artist is seen as one who traverses all the layers and, in the *moment*, reveals the hidden truth.

The mountains and hillocks generally are endowed with this axial meaning (see for instance the Scythian hills of Dobroja, the tumuli of Brittany, Boyne Valley in Ireland).

The notion of this point-moment finds expression in Damian's use of the small "point-like" sphere. Hence the multiplication beyond easy reckoning of these spheres calls forth yet another type of infinity, an infinite smallness : what Isaac Kapuano, prolonging the indications provided by Cantor and other mathematicians, has called *subfinité*. Subfinité may be found, fairly clearly expressed, in various religious and parareligious systems. The Luria Kabbala, for instance, claims that God, before creating the world submitted himself to *tsim-tsum*, that is to say that he underwent a process of shrinking down to a point so small that it enabled him to leave space, and yet, to concentrate all of his energy into it. Despite this punctuality, it does not seem that the "space" which God occupies in this system should be equated, as it would be in Euclidean geometry, with naught. The Euclidean notion of a point occupying strictly no space is unacceptable to our intuition. How could an accumulation of nothings, were they an infinite number, yield anything but nothing? We would therefore find it easier to represent – and let us remember that we are dealing here with representations, with the making tangible, visible of a knowledge that is also experience – a straight line by a non-homogeneous, "granular" structure, in which every point would be an element of a subfinité.

"Damian's forms," wrote Pierre Schneider, "are made to signify the sacred. His drawings are

monumental because they have not ceased referring to the background once occupied by cosmic presence. Henceforth, infinity no longer occupies the background but, so to speak, in the negative, the figure."¹ The process of negation alluded to might well serve to designate the process of conversion from virtual to actual infinite which is accomplished in the drawings and sculptures of Damian.

Let us stress again that the ways of Damian are not those of a modern mathematician, but those of a visionary artist who sees in mathematical figures, provided they are considered intuitively rather than rationally, one of the few paths toward the realm of the sacred open in our time.

On the History of Damian's Structures

It has often been noted that Damian's works are neither allegorical nor symbolic. For him art is not a system of significant signs, a language. His constructions are machines for capturing, materializing, visualizing cosmic energies and events.

Damian established the bases of his expressive system in the *Starry Sky* of 1951. This picture which resembles a screen oriented in such a way as to reflect the endless depth of constellated space contains all the elements which later on will serve to establish a relation between the space of the cosmos and the space of life. *Starry Sky*, therefore, must be regarded as a kind of radar designed for such a process of captivation rather than as pictorial transcription of an outer reality.

¹ Pierre Schneider, *Preface* to the catalogue of the exhibition Horia Damian, Michel Haas, Joan Mitchell, Galerie Rencontres, Paris, 1975

The picture's color is a single, unmodulated, midnight blue. The only structural element is the point. A beginning of serialization may be seen in the orthogonal alignments or the octagonal galaxies. Like so many buttons of a huge machine for capturing invisible vibrations, these elements permanently constitute the theme of the starry heaven.

And this single color, this single structural element will recur in all of Damian's creations. In 1970 with *Great Starry Parallelepiped* (page 58) the decisive mutation takes place. Henceforth, Damian uses three-dimensional space : the cycle of his *Galaxies* has begun. At the same time he begins to work on visionary projects in which the relationship between structured surfaces and smooth planes, the introduction of a subjective geometry, the apparition of rifts and inclinations define a new vocabulary and yield a series of strange, unprecedented objects rooted both in tradition and anticipation. *Great Starry Parallelepiped*, with its midnight blue surface, is a monumental cube of overwhelming physical presence, covered by a skin of innumerable small spheres which, through their motion, subtly contradict the geometric statement. All the elements of the artist's vocabulary, which we meet again in *The Hill* are here completely defined. The construction presents itself as an enormous container enclosing a mysterious space. It is placed somewhat obliquely on a succession of white podia whose frontal parts veer off toward the left as if someone had sought to deflect the convoy into a different direction, just as *The Hill* is submitted to stresses and strains that appear to alter its course several times along the way.

Damian's approach to three-dimensional space reads like the gradual realization of a fundamental need. Already in 1962 and 1963 he had produced a series of forms close to being "in the round" : the desire to go beyond the plane of the surface

is evident. However, it is the *Pyramids* produced in 1964-1965 that mark the breakthrough into depth. They are dramatic instances of that extreme simplicity of form and color which alone, according to the artist, are capable of expressing the oneness of his vision.

Beginning with a series of *Gates* (1966-1967) the relationship between surfaces covered with a fabric of small spheres and smooth surfaces leads to a new equilibrium in which granular vibrancy takes the upper hand.

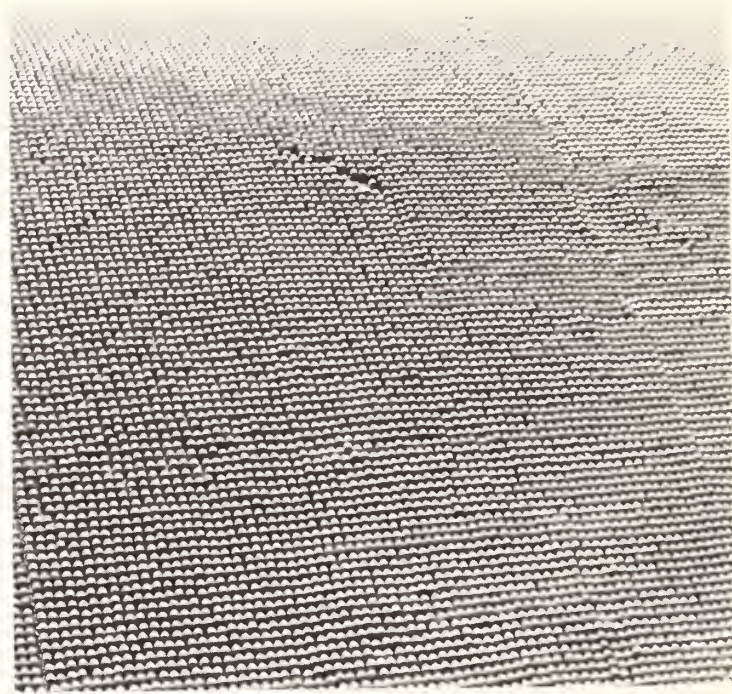
At last, with *Yellow Prow* (1972) exhibited that year at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, the structure becomes emancipated from the surrounding smooth surfaces. It foreshadows, several years in advance, not only *The Hill*, but also *Land*, Damian's most recent creation.

THE HILL

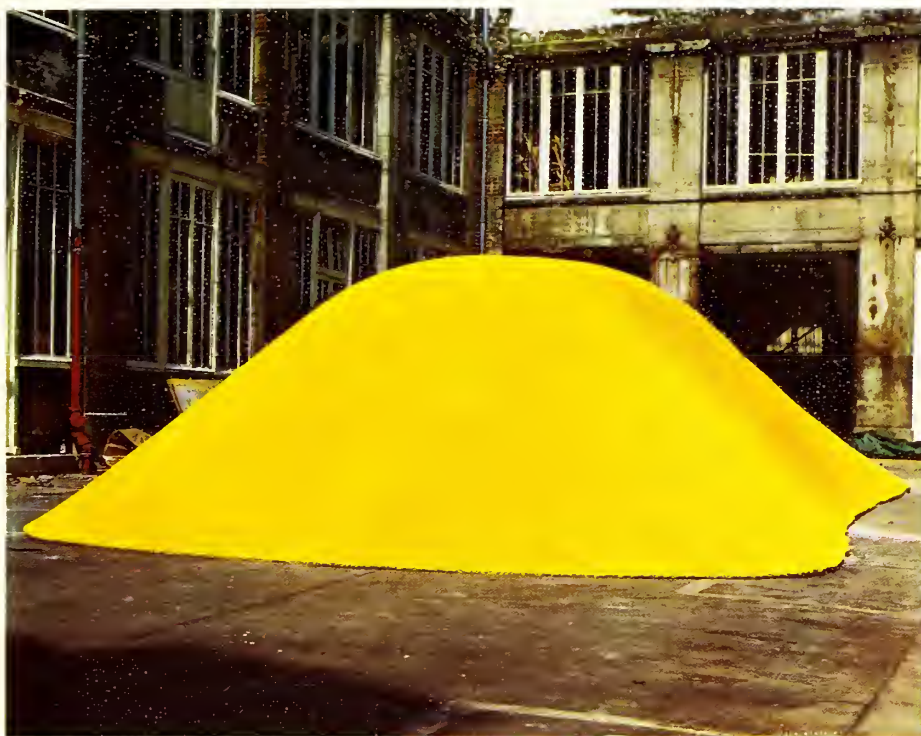
The form of *The Hill* was created of blocks of styrofoam put together in the workshops of Robert Haligon at Perigny sur Yerres. Cross-cuts were made every forty-two inches (one hundred and six centimeters). The twelve resulting sections were taken to another workshop at 74, rue du Faubourg St-Antoine in Paris. Put back together in this workshop, *The Hill* was covered with an insulating substance which has a plaster and fabric base. Seven hundred kilograms of combined polyester resin and glass cloth were then fired at it with a special gun. The Gallois workshops at Sannois applied this coating. Damian outlined the general pattern for the spheres which were to cover it and glued on each of the 380,000 small spheres of compressed paper (each one fourteen milimeters in diameter). These spheres had been made at the Rouget workshop in Paris. In gluing them Damian used Tixotropic Ukapon D 13T polyester. A coat of liquid resin hardened the covering of small spheres. To obtain the yellow covering, five coats of polyurethane paint were needed. *The Hill*, now complete, was newly cut into twenty-four sections. This was accomplished by carefully reproducing the initial twelve cross-cuts, and by making an additional longitudinal cut. It was only in this way that *The Hill* could be transported to New York. The crossing was made by boat, in special containers, and was expedited by Bedel and Co. of Aubervilliers and H.C. Ollendorff, Inc. of New York. It was then possible to reassemble the sculpture at the Guggenheim Museum within a few hours.







Detail

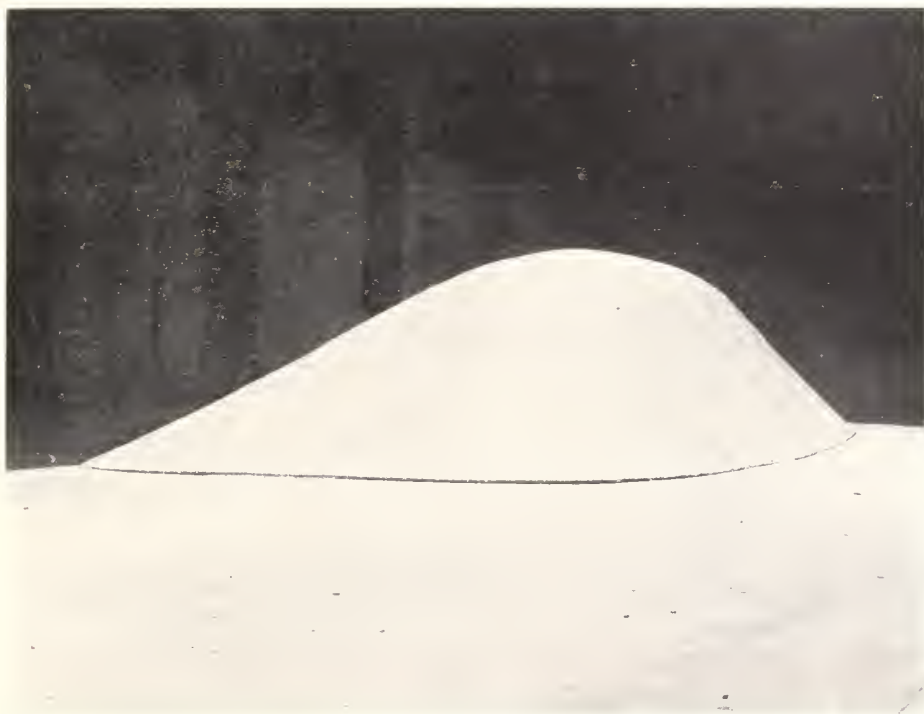


The Hill. 1976
Styrofoam, polyester, paper spheres impregnated with polyester resin, and yellow polyurethane paint,
6'6'' x 15'6'' x 41'6'' (2 x 4,70 x 12,60 m.)







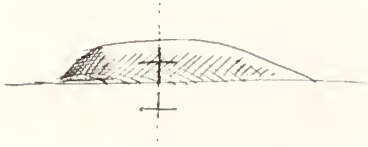


The Hill 1976

Styrofoam, polyester, paper spheres impregnated with polyester resin, and yellow polyurethane paint.
6'6'' x 15'6'' x 41'6'' (2 x 4,70 x 12,60 m.)

GENESIS OF *THE HILL*

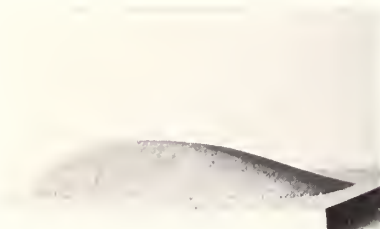
First there is an idea, a sketch. After this small sketch is made a period follows in which the artist is as if "possessed" by the form, because he returns to it again and again, while transforming it. Some sketches are conceived for future drawings; certain others are studies for the form. Afterwards, Damian undertakes large scale drawings, executed in his meticulous technique. Or he carries out a small scale sculpture which is for him the definitive form of a large construction.



The Hill. 1974

First sketch. Ink on paper

2 x 5 7/8" (5,1 x 14,9 cm.)



The Hill. 1975

Polyurethane.

5 1/4 x 27 1/2 x 30 1/4"

(13,2 x 70 x 77 cm.)

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Salvador Dali,

Teatro Museo Dali, Figueras, Spain.



The Hill. 1976

Watercolor, India ink, yellow pencil
on paper mounted on paperboard,
30 x 41 3/4" (76 x 106 cm.)

Private collection, Paris.



The Hill. 1976

Styrofoam, polyester, paper spheres
impregnated with polyester resin
and yellow polyurethane paint,
6'6" x 15'6" x 41'6"
(2 x 4,70 x 12,60 m.)

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition includes the sculpture *The Hill*, created in 1976, as well as twenty-three drawings, of which fifteen are closely related to *The Hill* (pages 30 (3), 33-43 and 53-54). The eight remaining drawings recall other projects executed by Damian over the last few years.

The Hill. 1976

Styrofoam, polyester, paper spheres impregnated with polyester resin, and yellow polyurethane paint, 6'6'' x 15'6'' x 41'6'' (2 x 4,70 x 12,60 m.)

The Hill. 1976

Watercolor, India ink, yellow pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 30 x 41 3/4'' (76 x 106 cm.)
Private collection, Paris

The Hill. 1976

Watercolor, India ink, blue and yellow pencil on paper mounted on paperboard,
29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

The Hill. 1975

Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

The Hill. 1975

Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

Structure with Red Ovals. 1952

Gouache on paper, 9 7/8 x 21 1/4'' (25 x 54 cm.)

The Hill. 1975

Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

The Hill. 1976

Watercolor, India ink, yellow pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 30 x 41 3/4'' (76 x 106 cm.)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Giuliano Gori, Prato

In this catalogue, the dimensions are given in the following order : height, width for the drawings and paintings .
height, width, depth for the sculptures.

The Hill. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

The Hill. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

The Hill. 1975
Watercolor, India ink, yellow pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 30 x 41 3/4'' (76 x 106 cm.)
Collection The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

The Hill. 1975
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

The Hill. 1975
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

The Hill. 1974
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

Galaxy 2. 1976
Watercolor, India ink, blue pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 30 x 41 3/4'' (76 x 106 cm.)
Collection Mr. Serge de Bloe, Brussels

Galaxy 2. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

Galaxy 3. 1976
Watercolor, India ink, blue pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 30 x 41 3/4'' (76 x 106 cm.)
Collection Mr. and Mrs. Ora and Sylvain Zucker, Brussels

Galaxy 3. 1974
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)
Collection The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Galaxy 3. 1976
Watercolor, India ink, blue pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 29 1/2 x 42 1/8'' (75 x 107 cm.)
Collection Mr. Christian Petrossian, Paris

Galaxy 3. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

The Pool. 1975
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)
Private collection, Paris

The Pool. Side facing South. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

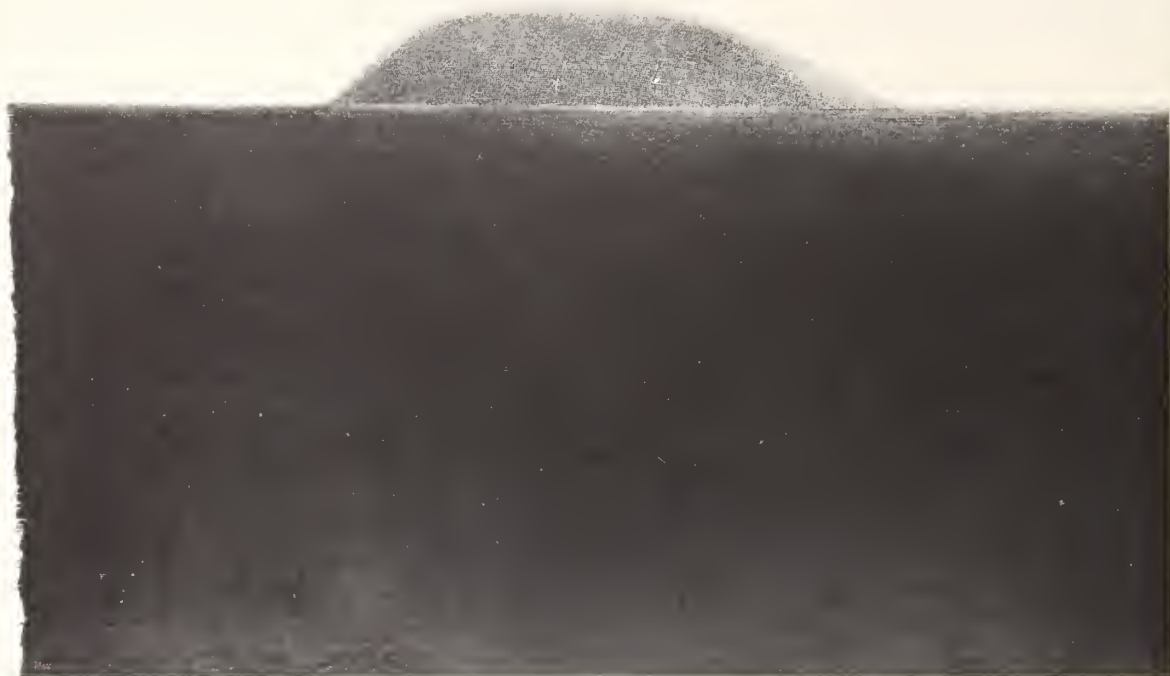
Land. 1975
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)
Collection The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Land. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)



The Hill. 1976

Watercolor, India ink, blue and yellow pencils on paper mounted on paperboard,
29 1/2 x 42 5/8" (75 x 108 cm.)



The Hill. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)



The Hill. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)



Structure with Red Ovals. 1952
Gouache on paper, 9 7/8 x 21 1/4" (25 x 54 cm.)

This drawing, done in 1952, is visibly the first idea of *The Hill*. The artist employs ovals (elements often used by him between 1951 and 1954). He repeats the oval figure aligning these elements in such a way that they do not really correspond to the form itself. In exactly marked places he adds ruptures, accidents. These belong to his language, for we find them in all his works.



The Hill. 1975
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)



The Hill. 1976

Watercolor, India ink, yellow pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 30 x 41 3/4" (76 x 106 cm.)

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Giuliano Gori, Prato



The Hill. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

Exhibitions
Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1975
References
Catalogue MAM, Rio de Janeiro, 1975



The Hill. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)



The Hill. 1975

Watercolor, India ink, yellow pencil on paper mounted on paperboard,
30 x 41 3/4" (76 x 106 cm.)

Collection The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



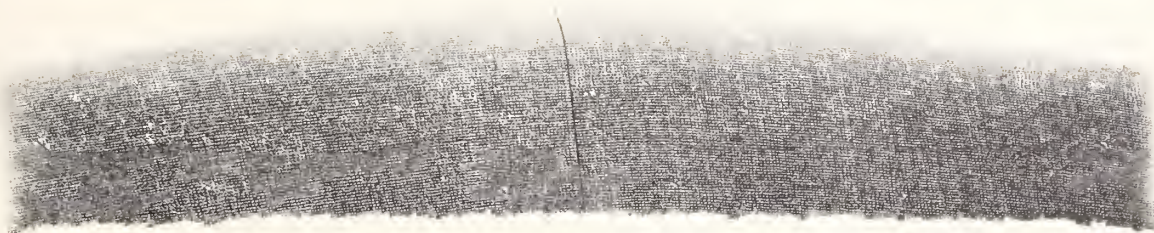
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The Hill. 1974
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

References

Catalogue Damian, Stadt Aachen Neue Galerie - Sammlung Ludwig, 1974



The Hill. 1974
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

Exhibitions

Grand Palais, Paris 1975

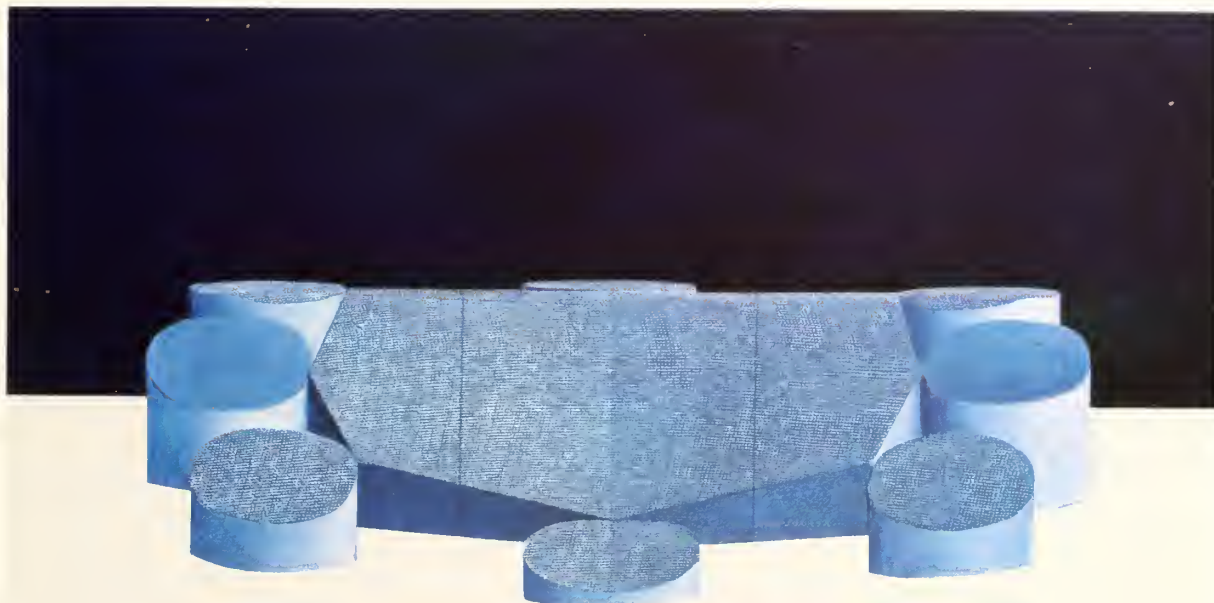
Galerie Rencontres, Paris 1975



The Starry Sky. 1951
 Oil on wood, 30 x 35'' (76 x 89 cm.)
 Signed and dated top left corner
 [This painting is not included in the exhibition]

This painting from 1951 contains, in essence, all the components of Damian's later work . . . choice of a single element (point, small sphere), choice of a single color (midnight-blue) deployed without modulation of tone. The composition is octagonal.

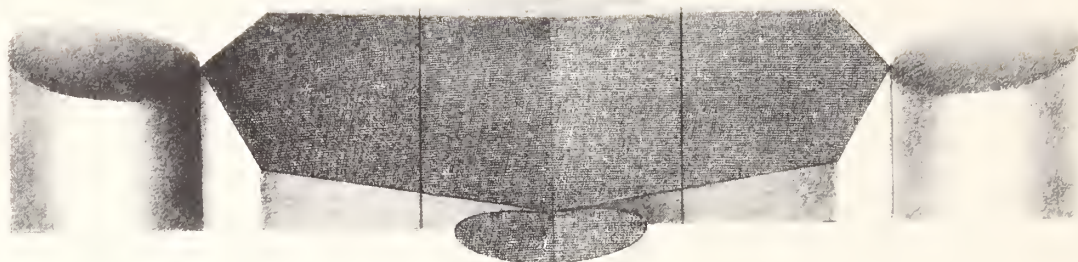
The theme of the construction *Galaxy 2*, done in 1973, is the same as that of *The Starry Sky* executed, however, in three dimensions.



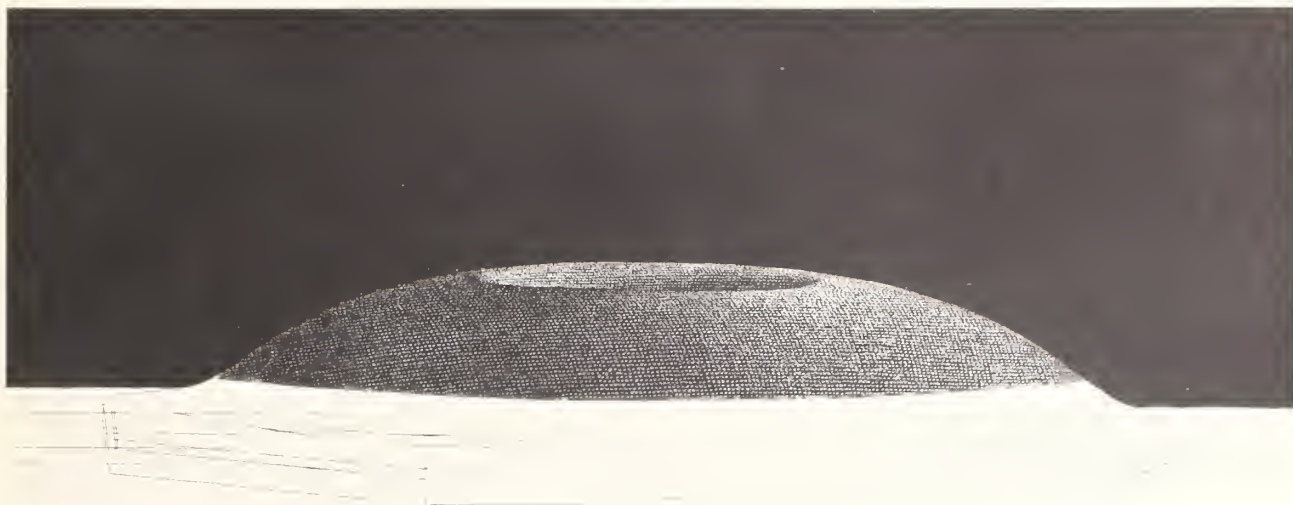
Galaxy 2. 1976

Watercolor, India ink, blue pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 30 x 41 3/4" (76 x 106 cm.)

Collection Mr. Serge de Bloe, Brussels



Galaxy 2. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)

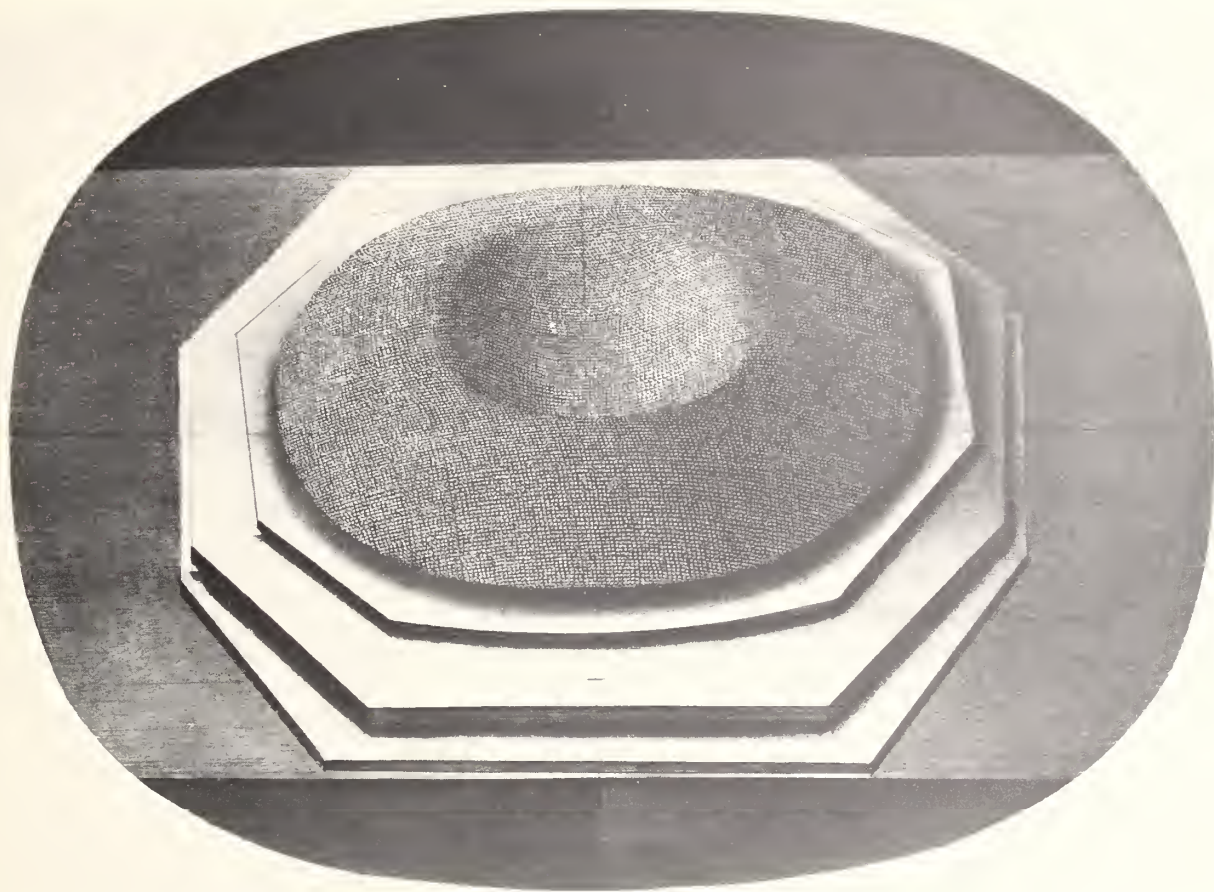


Galaxy 3 is a form that precedes *The Hill*. The central concavity and the movements of the covering, which turn to the left (an ever present movement in Damian's work), produce contradictory brilliances. The form is supported by three superimposed plinths, of almost the same shape, which create dark gaps and brilliant angles.

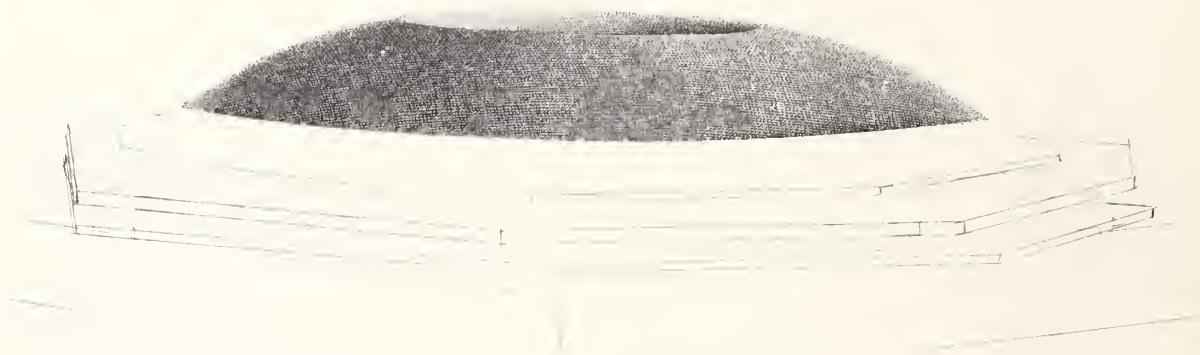
Galaxy 3. 1976
 Watercolor, India ink, blue pencil on paper mounted on paperboard,
 30 x 41 3/4 '' (76 x 106 cm.)
 Collection Mr. and Mrs. Ora and Sylvain Zucker, Brussels



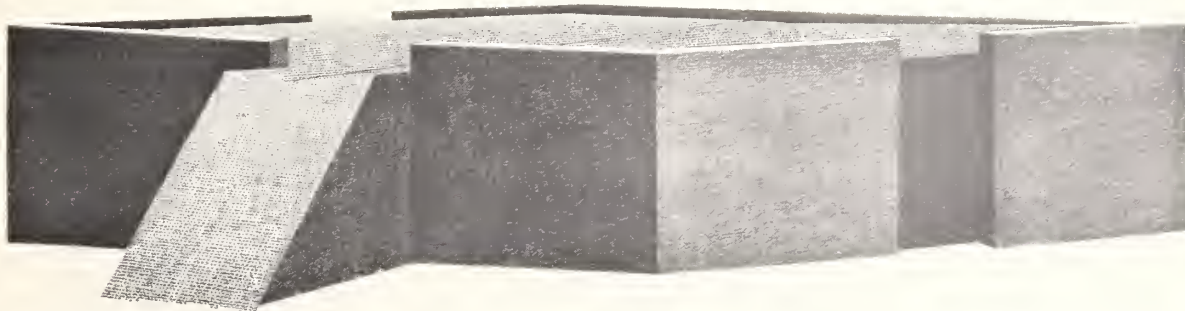
Galaxy 3. 1974
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)
Collection The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



Galaxy 3. 1976
Watercolor, India ink, blue pencil on paper mounted on paperboard, 29 1/2 x 42 1/8" (75 x 108 cm.)
Collection Mr. Christian Petrossian, Paris



Galaxy 3. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8" (75 x 108 cm.)



The Pool. 1975

Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)
Private collection, Paris

Exhibitions

Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro, 1975

References

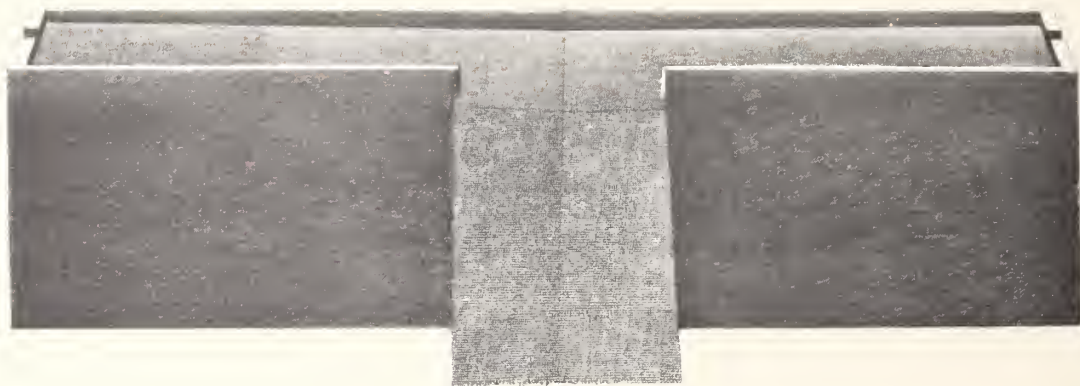
Catalogue MAM, Rio de Janeiro, 1975

The Pool

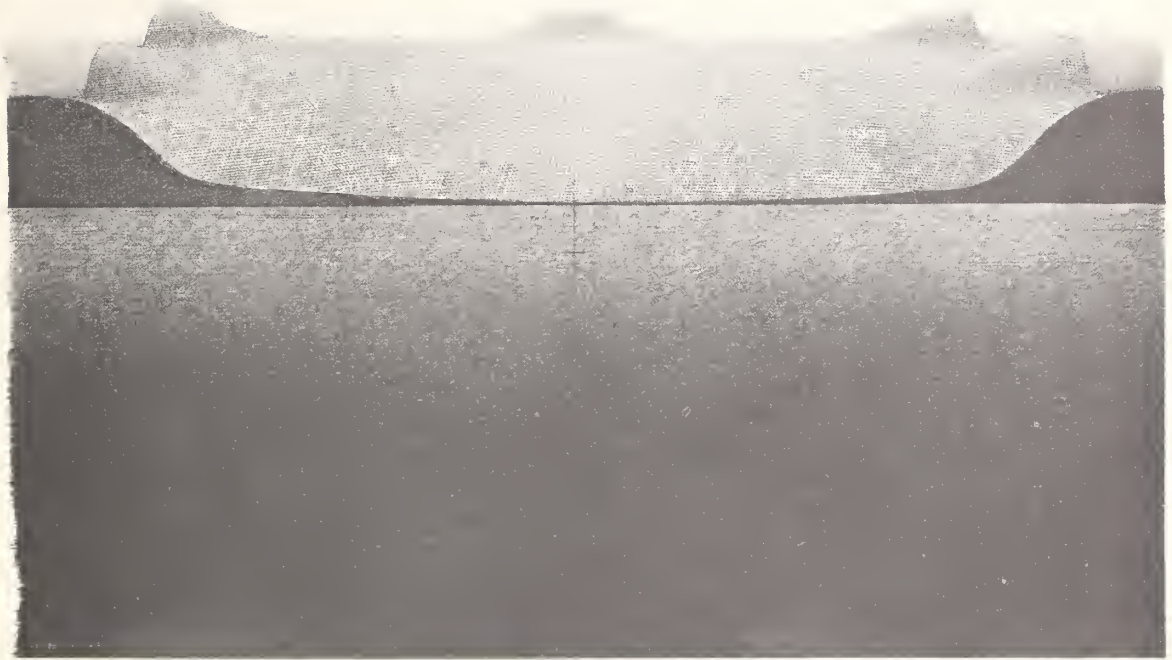
A rectangular form, *The Pool* was conceived by Damian as an Egyptian temple. The water flows off from the southern facade. Both the east and west walls have a door or opening.

Through these doors one sees the cross-cut of the dark substance which fills the rectangle. The object is fascinating because that which is supposed to be fixed (the walls) becomes mobile due to the gleam and the reflections.

On the other hand, that which is supposed to be mobile (the watery surface) looks to us like an unalterable brilliance



The Pool. Side Facing South. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8'' (75 x 108 cm.)



Land is Damian's most recent work. It gives the impression of a vast space, an impression which results from the relationship between the plain, which is a modulated surface, and the hills, which are only the swelling out of this surface. The cut through the middle of the hills conveys the idea of a continuity that goes on to infinity, in such a way that *Land* is not a detail of an infinite space, it *is* this infinite space.

Land. 1975
Blue pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8" (75 x 108 cm.)
Collection The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York



Land. 1975
Pencil on paper, 29 1/2 x 42 5/8" (75 x 108 cm.)

CHRONOLOGY

1922 Horia Damian is born February 27, at 7 : 10 in the evening, at Bucharest. Sun, Uranus, Venus and the moon are in conjunction in Pisces; Virgo is in the ascendant. His work will be the result of the dialogue between Pisces and Virgo: inspiration and analysis.

Childhood and youth in Bucharest.

1941-1945 At twenty, Damian already has a mastery of painting. He participates in many artistic events in Bucharest, where he is soon known and appreciated.

In the spring of 1941 he shows his work for the first time at the *Salonul Oficial de Pictură* at Sala Dalles in Bucharest. In the autumn his work is shown for the first time at the *Salonul Oficial de Desen*. The same year he enrolls in the School of Architecture, Bucharest.

One-man exhibitions :

Ateneul Român, Bucharest, February 1942 (first one-man show of paintings).

Sala Dalles, Bucharest, 1943

Ateneul Român, Bucharest, 1945.

Main public collections :

Muzeul Zambaccian, Bucharest

Muzeul de Artă al Republicii, Bucharest.

Receives, at Bucharest, the Anastase Simu prize.

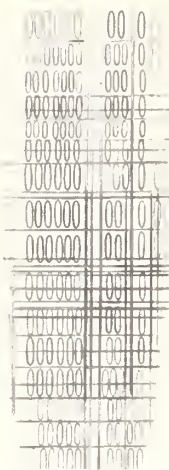
1946 On May 15 he arrives in Paris, having received a small scholar-ship. It is here that a long apprenticeship begins for him, in which he successively undergoes training with André Lhote, Léger and Auguste Herbin. Only a few months, with André Lhote were necessary to rid him of all his Cubist inclinations. But the time he spent with Léger was more significant. Léger helped him to see color as *ton local* (a term often used by Léger to refer to the real color value of an object irrespective of the play of light which modulates that color). Damian's encounter with the work of Mondrian occurs around 1950, through Felix Del Marle, an enthusiastic defender of the theories of Neo-Plasticism.

1951-1953 This encounter leaves its mark on his first original works. However, one cannot



The Starry Sky. 1951

Oil on wood, 30 x 35'' (76 x 89 cm.)



really say that these works belong directly Neo-Plastic school. They are, rather, the product of a highly individual nature, finely detailed, characterized by pure geometric forms and pale delicate colors. It is at this time that, implicitly, and in terms of the conventional artistic forms of this period highly personal traits appear traits which will be the points of departure for a completely new artistic language.

One-man exhibitions :
Galerie Arnaud, Paris, 1951, 1952,
1953, 1954.

Cathedral. 1952
Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 x 26'' (60 x 66 cm.)

1954-1957 Period in which the artist seems to have a presentiment of the work he will later accomplish; he investigates diverse possibilities in order to enrich his experience. The resulting works will only interest him to the extent that they produce something new on the level of execution. A great number of canvases from this period will be destroyed by the artist either at this time or later.

One-man exhibitions :
Galerie Stadler, Paris, 1957
Castelli Gallery, New York, 1957

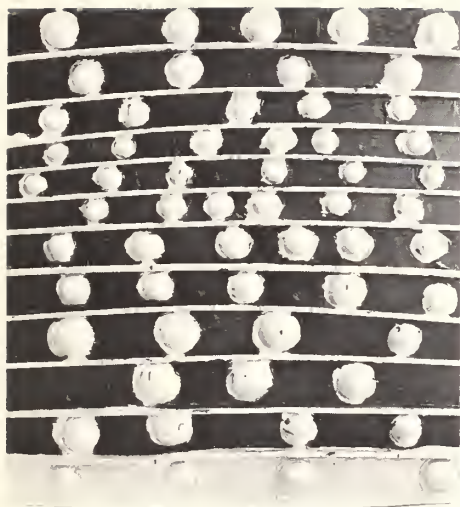
Receives the Lissone prize, Milan, 1956.

1959-1962 Damian produces many large scale works in which he uses a supporting layer of polyester. Elements which he had already discovered ten years earlier are used in a much freer style. Relief granulations or marks appear constantly. This being the era of action-painting. The artist feels the need to participate in a more physically direct way in the act of painting. There is a large body of work, full of beauty and power.

One-man exhibitions :
Galerie Stadler, Paris, 1958, 1960, 1962
Galerie 22, Dusseldorf, 1958

Constellation. 1961
Polyester and oil on wood,
78 3/4 x 59'' (200 x 150 cm.)
Collection International Center
of Esthetics, Turin.





Galleria dell'Ariete, Milan, 1959
 Michel Warren Gallery, New York, 1960
 Galerie du Palais des Beaux-Arts,
 Brussels, 1961
 Cordier-Warren, Inc., New York, 1962
 Neue Galerie im Kunstlerhaus, Munich, 1962.

Main public collections :
 The Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo
 The Museum of Modern Art, New York
 The Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh

Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad
 Museum, Oslo.
 Museo Civico, Turin
 Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam.

Tiered Structure. 1963
 Polyester and oil on wood,
 65 3/4 x 60 1/8'' (167 x 153 cm.)

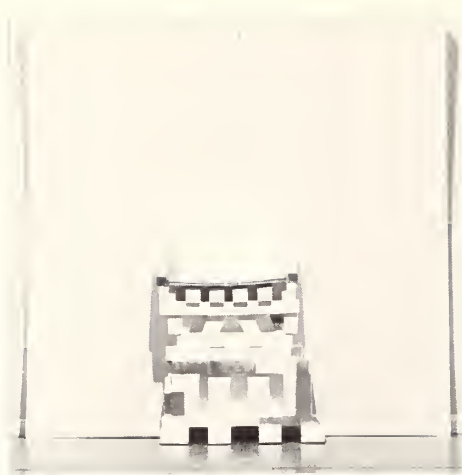
1964-1965 The reliefs increase in thickness and the composition becomes simpler. But the leit-motif of a repeated mark or sign is always present. It is a period of large scale constructions in half-relief, often on curved surfaces, and often characterized by geometric forms or the use of plinths integrated with the work.

Appearance, with the *Pyramids*, of simple structures with smooth surfaces. This will be one of the major elements of his work of the 1970's. He produces an entire series of compositions whose subject is a stepped pyramid. The first are very simple, with high steps, the edifice often leaning toward one side. At the very bottom there is sometimes a band of color which is surprising given the single color of the rest of the construction. At another point in this same series the steps become narrower and narrower, with a tendency to bunch up toward the bottom. The colors here are vivid : red, white, midnight-blue, gold. Towards the end of this period he begins the cycle of *Doors*.

One-man exhibitions :
 Galerie Stadler, Paris, 1964, 1965.



Pyramid. 1965
 Polyester and oil on wood,
 78 3/4 x 74 x 6 3/4''
 (200 x 188 x 17 cm.)



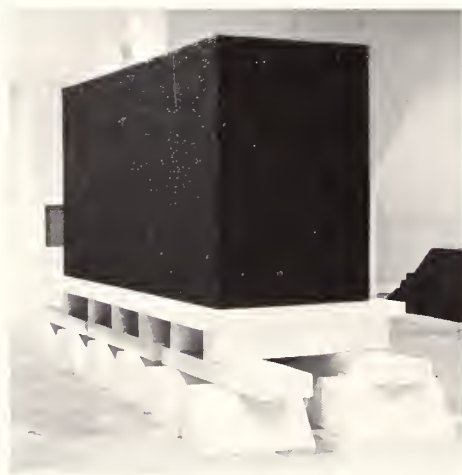
1966-1967 The other major element of his present work becomes evident : structures made up of small spheres assembled so as to form surfaces of a single color. Begins the series of *Thrones*, 1967.

First trip to India, 1967.

The Throne. 1969
Polyurethane and polyester,
98 1/2 x 104 x 27 1/2
(250 x 264 x 70 cm.)
Teatro Museo Dali, Figueras, Spain

1968 Begins the first *Constructions*

One-man exhibition :
Galerie Stadler, Paris, 1968.



1970 He constructs *The Great Starry Parallelepiped*. A compact block covered with small midnight-blue spheres, the mass of this construction appears as a totally autonomous element : this is the point of departure for all the later forms.

One-man exhibition :
Städtisches Museum, Trier, 1970.

The Great Starry Parallelepiped. 1970
Polyurethane, polyester, wood,
86 5/8 x 49 1/4 x 159 1/2''
(220 x 125 x 405 cm)
Galerie Stadler, Paris.

1972 The period of great visionary projects begins Creates *Galaxy - Project for a Monument* at Houston, Texas.

One-man exhibition :
Musée d'Art Moderne da la Ville de Paris.

1973 Creates *Galaxy 2* and *Galaxy 3*. Exhibits the *Galaxy 2* project at the São Paulo Bienal.

Receives the International prize *Arte-Comunicação* of the São Paulo Bienal.



Galaxy. Project for a monument in Houston - Texas. 1972
Created in July 1974 at the Stadt Aachen
Neue Galerie - Sammlung Ludwig
(3,50 x 1,94 x 11,56 m.)



Galaxy 2. 1973
Mixed media,
6 3/4 x 36 1/4 x 35'' (17 x 92 x 89 cm.)
Collection Mr. Jacques Wertheimer, Paris



Galaxy 3. 1973
Mixed media,
4 1/8 x 25 5/8 x 27 1/4'' (10,5 x 65 x 69 cm.)
Collection Mr. Jacques Wertheimer, Paris

1974 Creates *The Pool*. Begins the series of drawings of visionary projects. Opening of the Dali Museum at Figueras, Spain. Salvador Dali commissions an important work, the monumental *Entrance and Door* of the Museum, from Damian.

One-man exhibition :
Stadt Aachen Neue Galerie-Sammlung Ludwig.

First trip to New York.

1975 Creates *The Hill* and *Land*.

One-man exhibition :
Museu de Arte Moderna, Rio de Janeiro.

1976 Constructs *The Hill* for The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York.

Produces first series of original lithographs, entitled *9 Projets Visionnaires* (Éditions Denise René, Paris).

One-man exhibition :
Galerie Denise René, New York.

On the occasion of his exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, he decides to divide his time between Paris and New York, and live and work in both cities.



The Pool. 1974
Mixed media,
5 3/8 x 21 3/8 x 32 3/8''
(13,2 x 54,4 x 82,2 cm.)



The Hill. 1975
Polyurethane,
5 1/4 x 27 1/2 x 30 1/4''
(13,2 x 70 x 77 cm.)
Collection Mr. Jacques Wertheimer, Paris



Land. 1975
Polyurethane,
2 x 30 1/4 x 31 1/4''
(5 x 77 x 79,5 cm.)

PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

Denise Bourbonnais : cover and pp. 25, 28, 29, 58
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The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York : p. 48

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